

Message Text

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ACTION AF-18

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DODE-00 INR-11 NSAE-00 PA-04 RSC-01 USIA-15 PRS-01

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P R 021138Z AUG 74

FM AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9695

INFO AMEMBASSY COTONOU

AMEMBASSY LOME

AMEMBASSY NIAMEY

AMEMBASSY OUAGAGOUGOU

AMEMBASSY PARIS

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E.O. 11652: N/A

THSJF PGOV, IV

SUBJECT: IMPLICATIONS OF IVORIAN CABINET RESHUFFLE

1. WHAT THE RESHUFFLE MEANS INTERNALLY. OUR FIRST IMPRESSION IS THAT THE RESHUFFLE WILL HAVE MINOR, BUT POSITIVE, IMPACT INTERNALLY. SINCE ALL THE PRE-SHUFFLE RUMORS PREDICTED MUCH MORE DRAMATIC CHANGES (INCLUDING IN SOME VERSIONS THE DEPARTURES OF ECONOMIC MINISTER BEDIE, PLAN MINISTER DIAWARA AND AGRICULTURE MINISTER SAWADOGO) ONE HAS TO WONDER IF THIS IS ONLY A PARTIAL RE-SHUFFLE, WITH A SECOND PHASE TO COME JUST AFTER THE NATIONAL ELECTIONS SCHEDULED FOR EARLY 1975. IF WE ASSUME THAT THERE IS NOT TO BE A SECOND PHASE THIS YEAR, WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CHANGES?

(A) ASSIMILATION OF THE YOUNG MILITARY INTO THE CABINET SEEMS
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TO BE MOST SIGNIFICANT ELEMENT OF THE SHUFFLE. BOTH GENDARMERIE

COLONEL OUASSEMAN KONE AND NAVY LIEUTENANT COMMANDER LAMINE FADIGA HAVE RISEN FAST IN THE SERVICES. AT 35 AND 32 YEARS OF AGE EACH HAD REACHED THE HIGHEST GRADE THEY COULD EXPECT FOR SOME YEARS TO COME. EACH HAD BEEN REPORTED TO BE CONSIDERING LEAVING THE MILITARY TO "ENTER POLITICS."

BY BRINGING THEM INTO THE CABINET PRESIDENT HOUPHOUET NOT ONLY PRE-EMPTED THEIR POLITICAL BIDS BUT AT THE SAME TIME BROUGHT INTO THE CABINET EXCELLENT SOURCES OF INTELLIGENCE ON THE POLITICAL THINKING AND ACTIVITIES OF THE REST OF THE YOUNG MILITARY. SINCE THEIR NEW DUTIES HAVE NOT BEEN SPELLED OUT WE DON'T KNOW YET IF THEIR "PROMOTIONS" INTO THE CABINET WERE PRECAUTIONARY OR PROGRESSIVE.

WE DO UNDERSTAND THAT FADIGA, AS SECRETARY OF STATE FOR "MARINE" WILL BE RESPONSIBLE PRIMARILY FOR THE GROWING IVORIAN MERCHANT FLEET.

(B) THE CHANGES OF PORTFOLIO ARE ONLY SIGNIFICANT IN THE DESIGNATION OF MINISTER OF STATE MATHIEU EKRA AS CHARGED WITH INTERIOR.

HE REPLACES NANLO BAMBA, WHO IS GRACEFULLY LOWERED TO THE MINISTRY OF FORESTS AND WATER RESOURCES. BOTH MEN ARE OLD, TRUSTED FRIENDS OF HOUPHOUET'S FROM PRE-INDEPENDENCE DAYS. THIS GIVES EKRA PERHAPS THE MOST IMPORTANT POLITICAL POSITION IN THE GOVERNMENT, AS HE WILL NOW CONTROL THE PREFECTS AND SUB-PREFECTS, THE GENDARMERIE AND OTHER ASPECTS OF ABIDJAN'S LINKS TO THE INTERIOR OF THE COUNTRY.

ANOTHER SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS SHIFT IS IN THE CREATION OF THE POSITION OF SECRETARY OF STATE FOR INTERIOR AND THE NAMING OF THE GENDARMERIE COMMANDER KONE TO FILL IT. WE ARE GOING TO HAVE TO WAIT AND SEE WHAT CHANGES, IF ANY, THIS BRINGS ABOUT IN INTERNAL SECURITY AND/OR THE PERSONAL SECURITY OF PRESIDENT HOUPHOUET AND HIS GOVERNMENT.

(C) THE CREATION OF THE NEW PORTFOLIO OF MINISTER OF COMMERCE MAY HAVE SIGNIFICANCE FOR AMERICAN BUSINESS BUT THE SIGNIFICANCE IS NOT YET APPARENT. THE NEW SECRETARY OF COMMERCE MAURICE GNOLEBRA (39 YEARS OLD) IS HIGHLY RESPECTED FOR HIS EXPERTISE IN MONETARY AFFAIRS AND FOR HIS ADMINISTRATIVE CAPABILITIES.

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2. IMPLICATIONS FOR U.S. POLICY AND INTERESTS.

THE CABINET RE-SHUFFLE SEEMS, AT FIRST SIGHT, TO HAVE ONLY MINIMAL EFFECT ON OUR ABILITY TO REPRESENT U.S. POLICY AND INTERESTS. IN SO FAR AS EFFECTS ARE FORESEEABLE, THEY SEEM POSITIVE.

(A) THE OLD "NEUTRALITY AND PROSPERITY" TEAM REMAINS UNCHANGED. WE MUST ASSUME THAT FOREIGN POLICY UNDER USHER WILL REMAIN NEUTRAL,

OAU ORIENTED, GENERALLY PRO-WESTERN (ESPECIALLY ON NON-AFRICAN ISSUES) AND CONSERVATIVE.

(B) WE MUST ASSUME THAT ECONOMIC POLICY WILL CONTINUE TO BE GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT MOTIVATED. BEDIE WILL CONTINUE TO WELCOME, AND TO SEEK, U.S. AND OTHER WESTERN INVESTMENT. HE WILL CONTINUE TO WELCOME AMERICAN BUSINESSMEN WHO HAVE LEGITIMATE OFFERS TO MAKE. HE WILL CONTINUE TO BORROW FROM AMERICAN BANKS.

(C) WE CAN ASSUME THAT PLANNING UNDER DIARWARA WILL CONTINUE TO BE PREDICATED ON CONTINUED EXPANSION AND DIVERSIFICATION. HE WILL CONTINUE TO BE ATTRACTED BY, AND RECEPTIVE TO, AMERICAN MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES AND INDUSTRIAL TECHNOLOGY. HIS DOOR WILL CONTINUE TO BE OPEN TO AMERICAN BUSINESSMEN.

(D) WE CAN EXPECT SAWADOGO TO CONTINUE TO PUSH FOR INTENSIFICATION AND DIVERSIFICATION OF IVORIAN AGRICULTURE. HE WILL CONTINUE TO SEEK U.S. TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE ON A GRANT BASIS IF POSSIBLE, BUT BY CONTRACT WITH U.S. PRIVATE INSTITUTIONS IF NECESSARY. HE WILL CONTINUE TO BE RECEPTIVE TO AMERICAN AGRO-BUSINESSMEN. HE WILL ALMOST CERTAINLY CONTINUE TO SEEK BY ALL MEANS EVEN HIGHER PRICES FOR IVORIAN COFFEE AND COCOA.

IN LEAVING THESE KEY MINISTRIES UNCHANGED, PRESIDENT HOUPHOET HAS INDICATED THAT HE INTENDS TO CONTINUE THE BASIC LIBERAL, CAPITALISTIC, PRIVATE ENTERPRISE POLICIES WHICH HAVE MADE IVORY COAST ONE OF THE FASTEST DEVELOPING NATIONS IN WEST AFRICA. OUR ABILITY TO COMMUNICATE THE AMERICAN VIEWPOINT WILL IF ANYTHING BE ENHANCED UNDER DONA FOLOGO AS MINISTER OF INFORMATION. AS EDITOR OF "FRATERNITE MATIN" FOLOGO, ALMOST WITHOUT EXCEPTION, AVOIDED STORIES AND EDITORIALS WHICH WERE CRITICAL OF AMERICA.

3. AMBASSADOR SMITH HAS SEEN AND CONCURRED.
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